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ABSTRACT

To better understand the role of wives in families in which fathers raise the children, data were analyzed from a previously conducted study of partial role reversals in two-parent families. The sample consisted almost exclusively of 59 white, middle-class families with a child 3 to 6 years of age. Data gathered in separate interviews with mothers and fathers were used to compute an index of father involvement. During the interview, parents were asked about their own fathers' roles in child care, their own mothers' employment, discussions between spouses about parenting, and other issues. Parents were also given three relatively standardized instruments as part of the interview process: the Bem Sex Role Inventory, the Torgoff Developmental Timetable, and the Cognitive Home Environment Scale. Total scores on a scale developed from interview scores were used to divide the sample into father groups with high, intermediate, and low involvement. Results are discussed. (RH)

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
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Wives of Childrearing Men

Norma Radin

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Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development on April 3, 1981 in Boston. The research described in this paper was supported by a grant from The University of Michigan Rackham School of Graduate Studies.

There has been a burgeoning of interest in paternal childrearing during the past decade (Lamb, 1976; Parke and Sawin, 1980; Biller, 1971; Lynn, 1974; Radin, 1972) and a small component of that research explosion is focused upon fathers in intact families who have a major role, if not the major role, in raising children (Russell, 1978, 80; Sagi, in press, Lamb, Frodi, Hwang and Frodi, in press). I have been studying these unusual families for three years and have examined the attitudes and behaviors of some of these men in depth (Radin, 1978; 1980; in press). Recently I became aware of the fact that I had been neglecting the wives involved and began to analyze the data that had been stored on the women. This paper could have been called "Motherhood Rediscovered."

Before discussing the results which were obtained, a brief overview of the procedures, instruments, and sample is in order. The major goals of the initial investigation were to determine some factors that were predictive of partial role reversal in two-parent families and to assess the impact on their preschool children. To collect a sample of these families, notices were posted in 1977 around the University of Michigan and flyers distributed in local nurseries and day care centers. In addition, articles were published in local papers about the study and an announcement made on a radio station. It was particularly difficult to find the sample because of the numerous restrictions imposed to control as many variables as possible.

All of the families had to be middle-class, white (although one Asian was eventually included), with a child 3 to 6 years of age. In addition, the family had to have maintained the current arrangement for at least six months and be reasonably satisfied with the father's role in childcare. To serve as a basis of comparison, a group of comparable families which were more traditional were recruited through word of mouth and friends of those working on the project.

In the final sample, which was clearly self-selected, there were 59 families. The mothers and fathers were interviewed separately in their homes and the children were administered a battery of instruments. Because the families were unable to identify the father's role in childrearing as high, medium, or low with any certainty, information gathered in the interview was used, on an a priori basis, to compute an index of father involvement. The scale developed had 5 components: 1) the father's role in socialization of the child; 2) his role in the physical care of the child; 3) his role in decision making about the youngster, 4) his availability to the child; and 5) an overall statement by the parent regarding the amount of father involvement. A total score was computed for each parent and a grand total calculated which was the sum of both parents' totals.

This grand total was used to divide the sample into three groups with 20 in the high father involved group, 20

in the low father involved group, and 19 in the intermediate group. There were ten boys and girls in the high and low groups and 12 boys and 7 girls in the middle cluster. In other reports on this study (Radin, 1978; 1980; in press), evidence was offered to show that the groupings were valid and that there was, in general, high agreement between parents about the father's role in raising the child.

During the interview the parents were asked about many other issues including their own father's role in childcare, their own mother's employment, discussions between spouses about parenting, etc. The parents were also administered three relatively standardized instruments as part of the interview: The Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974) which assesses each parent's masculinity and femininity as independent dimensions; the Torgoff Developmental Timetime (Torgoff, 1967) which assesses a parent's achievement expectations of the child and independence granting; and the Cognitive Home Environment Scale (Radin and Sonquist, 1968) whose total score reflects the parent's overall efforts to stimulate the child's intellectual development. The instrument also has three factors, direct teaching activities, educational materials in the home, and future expectations for the child.

Results

Because time constraints preclude a discussion of all the data in the tables, just a few of the trends that appear

to be most pronounced or provocative will be highlighted. In Table 1 appear the significant correlations found with the maternal variables that were conceptualized as potential antecedents of the current childcare arrangement. These include the mother's perceptions of her own father's involvement in her upbringing, her feelings about him, and her scores for masculinity and femininity. A rather clear pattern emerges when one examines the total sample, or the subsamples of mothers of sons or mothers of daughters. Mothers whose own fathers were less available have husbands who are more involved in childrearing. Further, in general, the more positive her feelings about her own father's involvement, the more involvement by her husband.

Table 2 contains the same data for the high father involved and low father involved groups and generally supports the pattern, although there are exceptions. In addition, in the group where the father was the primary caregiver, the mother's masculinity score was negatively linked to father involvement variables; thus within this group the greater the father's involvement in childrearing, the less masculine the mother's sex role orientation.

In Tables 3 and 4 appear the significant correlations obtained with measures relevant to the mother's work, spouse, and sex-role orientation in the total group, and sex-of-child subgroups. For the total sample, it appears that the more money the mother earns, the lower her femininity score, and the less involved she is in direct teaching activities with

the child, e.g., teaching him numbers and colors. However, large earnings are also linked with more educational materials in the home. In addition, the more her husband is involved in childcare, the better the mother feels about her job and his role in childrearing. Insofar as her sex role orientation is concerned, the more feminine her orientation, the later her achievement expectations of her child, and the more nurturant and involved she feels her own father was as she was growing up.

There are similarities and differences when the data concerning boys and girls are compared. For both mothers of sons and daughters, greater maternal income is linked to less direct teaching, and positive feelings about her job are linked to the availability of her husband to care for their youngster. Further, for both mothers of sons and daughters, good feelings about the husband's role in childcare are positively associated with the amount of his involvement.

There are also numerous differences. For example, for mothers of boys, her income is correlated with positive feelings about her own father; for mothers of girls, her income is linked to negative feelings. Only for girls is the mother's femininity related to her own father's nurturance; only for boys is the mother's masculinity associated with her early independence granting.

Before discussing Table 5 which contains comparable correlates wound within the high father involved group, it should be pointed out that associations between father

involvement and mother's income were omitted from Tables 3 and 4 because, in keeping with the study's definition of the traditional family, no parents were included in the low involved group when the mother worked over 10 hours per week. This restriction on earnings did not affect the high father involved group where all the mothers worked or were students on a full-time basis. In general, it can be seen in Table 5 that the more money the mother earns, the more involved her husband is in childcare. And the more he is involved, the lower her masculinity score. In addition, the more her husband is involved and the more satisfying their discussions on parenting, the better she feels about the childcare arrangement. Further, the higher her husband's socioeconomic status within the middle class, the more positive her feelings about her job.

The last table contains the results obtained when sex of child and father involvement group (high vs. low) were used in analyses of variance computations as independent variables and mother scores on the Cognitive Home Environment Scale, the Developmental Timetable, and the Bem scale were employed as the dependent variables. It appears that the high father involvement is associated with more educational material in the homes and less direct teaching by mothers. Further, mothers' overall efforts to stimulate the child's cognitive growth is highest for girls in traditional families and lowest for girls in father primary

caregiver homes. An interaction effect was also obtained for the achievement expectations scores where the latest expectations are held for boys in father primary caregiver homes and the earliest expectation held for girls in those same families. Not reflected in the tables was the fact that a chi square test was used to determine if more women in the high father involved group had mothers who were working when they were growing up; the chi square value was not significant.

Discussion

From the mass of data presented, a few statements can be made with some confidence. Mothers who feel positively about their own fathers' involvement in their upbringing but experienced little of it are most likely to have husbands who play a major role in childcare. This tentative conclusion is supported by another finding obtained in the study. Only for the high father involved group was there not a significant association between mothers' perceptions of her own father's nurturance and his total involvement in her care as a child. For the other 2 groups there was a high correlation, over 60. Thus, it appears that mothers who experienced the frustration of a loving father who was unavailable may be attempting to spare their youngster this experience. Or it can be said that mothers are trying to compensate in their conjugal family

for the deficiencies in their family of origin.

Compensation may also be involved in the dual findings that mothers whose husbands play a major role in childrearing while the women work or attend school spend less time interacting with the preschooler in an instructional manner but provide more educational materials for the youngster to use. Further, the efforts they do make to foster the child's cognitive growth appears to be focused on sons rather than daughters. The daughters in homes where fathers are the major caregivers are also at a disadvantage (although this could be questioned) when their mother's achievement expectations are considered: mothers appear to expect earlier mastery by girls than by boys in families where the father is the primary caregiver. Perhaps the mother is attempting to compensate for the father's perceived lack of competence in handling young daughters. Finally, whether wives of men who are highly involved in the traditionally female task of childcare are truly less masculine, or merely overcompensating as they complete a sex-role questionnaire remains to be determined.

Although one must be cautious in making causal statements from concurrent data, it appears that, in general, mothers feel more comfortable about their jobs when husbands are more involved in childcare and there is good communication between the spouses about parenting.

Apparently the role of worker for women is closely related to the roles of parent and spouse. The family and occupational systems are not segmented.

The different patterns of association found in mothers of boys and mothers of girls is puzzling. It is difficult to explain why good feelings about her own father and his involvement in her care are related to high earnings for mothers of sons and low wages for mothers of daughters. Perhaps the relationship in the latter group between her father's nurturance and her femininity is relevant since greater femininity in the total sample was associated with lower income. Further research in the area is obviously needed, particularly to determine which came first, high wages for women or low femininity.

In conclusion it can be said that mothering is indeed complex, even in homes, perhaps particularly in homes, where there is considerably more fathering than mothering taking place. It appears that these women's feelings and behaviors are mediated by the sex of their preschooler and at least one problem solving strategy they have adopted is that of compensation. Finally, there are suggestions of close links between the roles of dauther, wife, mother, employee, and woman.

Table 1

Significant Correlations Between Potential Maternal Antecedents and Measures of Paternal Involvement in Childcare for the Total Sample For Boys and Girls

Potential antecedent	Paternal childrearing measure		Coefficient of correlation
Total Sample			
Her father's availability	Father:	Decision making	-.31*
	Mother:	Decision making	-.30*
Her past feelings re: her father's involvement	Mother:	Childcare	.34*
	Father:	Statement of involvement	.28*
	Father:	Childcare	.41**
	Father:	Total score	.27*
Girls			
Her father's availability	Mother:	Decision making	-.57**
	Father:	Socialization	-.40*
	Father:	Decision making	-.40*
Boys			
Total score for her father's involvement	Father:	Statement of involvement	-.48*
Her past feelings re: her father's involvement	Mother:	Decision making	-.45*
	Mother:	Childcare	.53*
	Father:	Childcare	.58***
	Father:	Decision making	-.38*
	Father:	Total score	.43*
	Mother:	Statement of involvement	.36*
	Father:	Statement of involvement	.43*

Note The N for the total sample is 59, however, because of some missing data, the Ns ranged from 53 to 59. The N for girls is 27 and 32 for boys, however, because of missing data the Ns varied from 25 to 27 for girls and from 26 to 32 for boys. D.f. = N -2.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 2

Significant Correlations Between Potential Maternal Antecedents and Measures of Paternal Involvement in Childcare by Father Involvement Group

Potential antecedent	Paternal childrearing measure		Coefficient of correlation
Mother primary caregiver group			
Mother variables			
Total score for her father's involvement	Father:	Socialization	-.69**
Her father's availability	Father:	Socialization	-.48*
	Mother:	Decision making	-.50*
	Mother:	Childcare	.50*
Her father's decision making	Father:	Socialization	-.57*
Her total score for her father's nurturance	Father:	Socialization	.52*
	Mother:	Socialization	.53*
Father primary caregiver group			
Mother variables			
Total score for her father's involvement	Father:	Statement of involvement	-.61**
	Father:	Childcare	.60*
Her father's availability	Father:	Decision making	-.47*
	Mother:	Socialization	-.47*
Her Bem Masculinity score	Mother:	Total score	-.54*
	Grand total score of father's involvement		-.55*

Note The N for each group is 20, however, because of missing data the Ns ranged from 17 to 20. D.F. = N -2.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 3

Significant Correlations With Mother Variables Related to Her Work, Husband, and Sex Role in the Total Sample

Mother Variables	Other Relevant Variables	Coeff. of Correlation
Employment Related		
Her income	Mother's Bem femininity score	-.26**
	Mother's CHES: Future expectations	.30**
	Mother's CHES: Educational materials	.31*
	Mother's CHES: Direct teaching	-.32*
	Hours child is in childcare	.29*
Her feelings re: her work	Mother's satisfaction with discussion on parenting practices	.30*
	Mother: Husband's availability	.41**
Husband Related		
Her feelings re: her husband's involvement in childcare	Mother: Statement of husb. involvement	.36**
	Mother: Husband's socialization	.26*
Sex Role Related		
Her Bem femininity score	Her income	-.26**
	Her father's involvment in childcare	.37**
	Her father's involvement in decision-making	.35*
	Mother's Torgoff:Independ. granting (a)	.39*
	Her father's nurturance	.43**
Her Bem masculinity score	Mother CHES: Future expectations	.43**

Note: N = 59 except for cases where data were missing; d.f. = N-2.

a) Score is average age when independence is granted, thus a higher score reflects later independence granting

*p < .05
**p < .01

Table 4

Significant Correlations with Mother Variables Related to her Work, Husband, and Sex Role By Sex of Child

Mother Variables	Other Relevant Variables	Coef. of Correlation
Girls		
Employment Related		
Her income	Mother CHES: Direct teaching	-.42*
	Mother's father's nurturance	-.41*
Her feelings re: her work	Mother CHES: Future expectations	-.47*
	No. of hours discussing par. practices	.53**
	Mother: Husband availability	.47*
Husband Related		
Her feeling re: her husband's involvement in childcare	Mother: Statement of husband's involvement	.46*
	Mother Torgoff: Achievement expectations(a)	.54*
Sex Role Related		
Her Bem femininity score	Mother's father's nurturance	.56*
Her Bem masculinity score	Mother Torgoff: Independence granting(b)	-.52*
Boys		
Employment Related		
Her income	Mother's father's involvement in childcare	.43*
	Mother's feelings re: her father's involvement in past	.52*
	Mother's feelings re: her father's involvement now	.38*
	Mother's satisfaction with discussion on parenting practices	-.42*
	Mother Torgoff: Achievement expectations(a)	.39*
	Mother CHES: Direct teaching	-.43*
Her feelings re: her work	Mother: Husband's availability	.38*
	Mother: Statement of husband's involvement	.42*
	Husband's nurturance (estimate of M and H)	.46*
	Mother's satisfaction with childcare arrange.	.54**
Husband Related		
Her feeling re: husband's involvement in childcare	Mother: Statement of husband's involvement	.65***
	Mother: Socialization	.37 *
Sex Role Related		
Her Bem femininity score	Mother Torgoff: Independence granting(b)	.39*
Her Bem masculinity score	Mother CHES: Future expectations	.47*

Note: N for boys is 32 and for girls it is 27 except in instances where there was some missing data. D.F. = N-2.

(a) Score is average age of child when expectations are held thus a higher score reflects later expectations.

(b) Score is average age when independence is granted thus a higher score reflects later independence granting.

*p < .05
**p < .01
***p < .001

Table 5

Significant Correlations With Mother Variables Related to Her Work, Husband, and Sex Role in Father Primary Caregiver Group

Maternal Variables	Other Relevant Variables	Coeff. of Correlation
Employment Related		
Her income	Mother CHES: Total score	.49*
	Mother CHES:Future expectations	.61*
	Mother Torgoff: Achievement expectations(a)	.47*
	Husband:Statement of his involvement	.45*
	Mother: Husband availability	.61**
Her feelings re: her work	Mother satisfaction with childcare arrange.	.63**
	Husband's Hollingshead SES score	.52**
Husband Related		
Her feelings re: husband's involvement in childcare	Mother: Statement of husband's involvement	.46*
	Mother's satisfaction with discussions on parenting practices	.65*
	Mother: Husband's role in socialization	.65***
	Mother's age	-.52*
Sex Role Related		
Her Bem femininity score	Mother's age	.46*
Her Bem masculinity score	Her father's role in decision making	-.61*
	Her father's nurturance	.67**
	Mother: Total score for husband's involve.	-.54*
	Grand total score for husband's involvement	-.55*

Note: N is 20 except for cases where data were missing. D.F. =N-2.

(a) Score is average age of child when expectations are held thus higher scores reflect later expectations

(b) Score is average age of child when independence is granted thus higher score reflects later independence granting

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

Table 6

Two-Way Analyses of Variance with Significant F Values and Mother Variables as Dependent Measures

Dependent Variable	F Value for Sex Effects	F Value for Father Involvement Effect	F Value for Interaction Effect
CHES: Quantity of educational materials in the home		4.50* (a)	
CHES: Total Score			6.34* (c)
CHES: Direct TEaching		4.24* (b)	
Torgoff: Achievement Expectations			4.93 (d)

a) Higher for mothers in father primary caregiver families

b) Lower for mothers in father primary caregiver group

c) Rank order highest to lowest scores:

1) Girls in traditional homes; 2) Boys in father primary caregiver families; 3) Boys in traditional families; 4) Girls in father primary caregiver families.

d) Rank order highest to lowest reflecting latest to earliest achievement expectations:

1) Boys in father primary caregiver families; 2) Girls in traditional families; 3) Boys in traditional families; 4) Girls in father primary caregiver families.

*$p < .05$

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